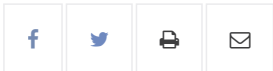


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First N.J. woman state trooper charges sexual harassment



NEWARK, N.J. -- New Jersey's first female state trooper has sued the state, claiming she was sexually harassed and discriminated against and was forced to spy on women recruits to determine if they were lesbians, lawyers said Thursday.

Gail Cornelius Just's charges came at a time when the state police were already under fire.

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Five troopers went on trial this week in New Brunswick on charges they covered up assaults on motorists on the New Jersey Turnpike, and civil rights groups have claimed black drivers are targeted for traffic stops.

Just, a 15-year veteran from Sandyston Township, was joined in her claims by Nilda Rivera of Paterson, a legal secretary who said she resigned as a civilian employee because of sexual harassment.

The suit, naming the state, the Division of Criminal Justice, the state police and Police Lt. James P. Smith as defendants, was filed Wednesday in Sussex County Superior Court in Newton.

In court papers, Just said she was singled out in 1981 while she was assigned as an instructor at the State Police Academy in Sea Girt. The Internal Affairs Bureau allegedly ordered her 'to spy upon women recruits for the purpose of determining whether they manifested homosexual tendencies.'

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Her orders included spying on the women 'through small openings in walls to see if they engaged in lesbian activity,' Just said.

Just also claimed she was unfairly denied promotion to sergeant and was removed from leadership of a squad in the narcotics task force.

Just was the only woman in the state police when she was sworn in on Jan. 30, 1975. As of last September, there were 71 women out of a total force of 2,949.

Capt. Thomas Gallagher, a state police spokesman, refused to comment on Just's allegations against the department and Smith and said the division has not yet seen the complaint. He said an internal investigation was underway.

Homosexuals are not barred from becoming troopers, Gallagher said.

Just also said Smith, in 1981 a sergeant and supervisor with the State Police Narcotics North Division, assigned her to a special 'minority squad' with five black men and a Hispanic. The other squad was composed of eight white men, she charged.

Smith constantly made crude references to her sex and made fun of her because of her menstrual cycle, Just said.

Rivera also attacked Smith, saying he 'referred to her in such discriminatory terms as 'spic' and 'burrito eater.'" Rivera said she was also the victim of sexual references.

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